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MODERN CIRCUIT RIDERS IN CHOSEN

THERE is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches."

2 Cor. 11:28

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Modern Circuit Riders in Chosen

"SWINGING AROUND THE CIRCUIT"

The nearest approach America knows to an evangelistic missionary's life in Chosen, is that of the circuit rider of pioneer days. Such a missionary usually has from twelve to seventy-five churches under his care, some comprised of groups of about twenty people, others having as many as 600 members; some only two or three miles apart, others separated by thirty miles. In the latter case a day's travel is required to go from one to the other church—travel made slow because a missionary, like an army, though perhaps mounted on horse or bicycle, must nevertheless "travel on his stomach" through a hotelless, spare-roomless, bedless land. Therefore, at least a few blankets and provisions must be laden on a tough, slow-footed, thirty-miles-a-day travelling pack-pony, led by a horse boy, to whom the flight of time means nought.

The average circuit rider visits his churches twice a year. For these visits appointments are made often months in advance. In "swinging 'round the circuit" it is often late afternoon or evening before the appointed church is reached. Usually just outside the town the circuit rider is met by a procession of white-robed figures — not angels yet, though Christians—and escorted to a low room, perhaps ten feet square, in a thatched or occasionally tiled house. This room has been specially "cleaned" for the use of the missionary. Even so it is better not to look under the mats. Sometimes, to be sure, the circuit rider would prefer to stay outside, but

courtesy forbids; and so he sits on the floor for hours examining church records, conferring with officers, and examining candidates for baptism or for the timid entrance into the catechumenate. When the candidates are women they are usually so nervous and frightened that with averted faces they can scarcely summon courage to answer the few simple but necessary questions.

This work, with the church service following, often takes until midnight. When at length one lies down to rest, it is by no means assured, for in nearly all Korean houses there are many "preventatives of sleep," while outside, across the fifteen foot courtyard, are horses, cows, pigs and chickens, some of which retire late and some of which rise early. In the morning, after breakfast and prayers the circuit rider is away again. For months each year this is a daily experience.

In the work of his circuit the missionary is associated with Korean pastors and unordained helpers each in charge of from one to ten churches, depending on their size, and ability to pay the modest salary of from five to ten dollars a month. He also oversees the work of colporteurs supplied by the Mission or Bible Society, and evangelists and Bible women supported by the churches. There are also a number of primary schools and their teachers, and each little church has its officers—lay-preachers these—deficient in education, as a rule, save that God's Word in their hearts "as a burning fire, cannot be restrained."

The circuit rider is also executive head of the work in his circuit. This is of two kinds: the edification of Christians in Christ, and the winning of non-Christians. Two or more meetings of all leaders in the

circuit are held each year, at which times everything concerning the circuit is discussed. Reports from churches, colporteurs, evangelists and Bible women are heard. Plans for raising salaries are made which, however they may stimulate interest, have never yet stooped to anything less than direct giving; no bazaars, no suppers or entertainments for the painless extraction of money having ever been held in these churches. Days are appointed for offerings; villages on which evangelistic work is to be concentrated are decided upon; pledges for personal work among the unconverted are taken; Sunday-school lessons are chosen; curricula for Bible study classes, one to four in each local church, and two or more district classes with teachers for the same, are determined upon. This work influences every Christian in the country and demands closest attention. Throughout the year the missionary must keep in constant touch with all who are associated with him, and by letter or personal visit insure the work being done when and as agreed; for executive power is as yet undeveloped in the Korean character, and many are the difficulties arising from its lack.

HEART STIRRING EXPERIENCES

In working out these plans, difficulties and problems innumerable, and joys and heart-stirring experiences not a few are encountered. In a difficult field where three fine souls are working, a member of a large and influential family became mentally unbalanced. These three people literally spent days praying with the man, for demon possession and exorcism by prayer are realities to Korean Christians. Success so far crowned their efforts that the man came to

the Mission Hospital in Pyeng Yang, where he stayed for several months and returned home apparently well. He became a Christian and for two months strove to win his relatives and neighbors, who, rejoicing over his return of reason, accepted Christ and set apart a building for a church. Soon thirty people were regularly worshipping there. The missionary came, rejoiced with the people and accepted this man as a catechumen.

In the middle of the night following he was aroused by some one making a disturbance outside his door. It was this man, wildly insane again. The Christians, believing the evil spirit had returned, got him into the house and spent the rest of the night praying for him. In the morning, he was somewhat quieter, so the missionary gathered the man's relatives together to persuade them to continue their new interest in Christ; and after comforting as well as possible the three who are the salt of that particular neighborhood, at ten o'clock in the morning left for an appointment seventeen miles away. Arrived there he had no sooner entered the house than he heard a voice which he recognized as belonging to an old man, blind, deaf and friendless, whom he had met three months before, fifty miles away. Going out he found the old man in a more pitiable state than before, for that frosty morning in crossing a stream he had fallen into the water. What could be done? The old man was made comfortable for that day and steps taken towards a permanent solution of his problem of life, by no means an easy task in this land of few charitable institutions. For such experiences every missionary needs a wisdom greater than Solomon's.

RIGHT OUT OF HEATHENISM

If all Christians, the missionary included, were more like their Lord, a difficult class of problems would vanish. Right out of heathenism, with Christian character unformed, and with few examples to inspire, new ideals, though sincerely professed, are with frailty lived up to. How is one to rebuke the sin yet save the sinner? An old man, once wealthy, but later penniless, on examining the school treasurer's books, thought the treasurer had embezzled fifty yen. Following good Korean precedent he went to the man's house, hailed him out and in a loud voice told him, and incidentally all his neighbors about it. A quarrel arose and strained relations in the church resulted. An examination of the books proved there had been no embezzlement. But the bias of long years of pride and station, lived before he knew Christ, was in ascendancy in the old man's heart, and he would not retract his statements though he had to admit he had no proof for them. It became necessary to discipline him, but when the missionary arrived, the old gentleman was ill. The missionary was received without cordiality, but after a few verses of Scripture and prayer, the old man's cold heart thawed a little and that night he confessed to God and in the morning to the missionary. In less than a month he died a triumphant death, having led his son, heretofore an evil man, to Christ, because the latter saw and was greatly moved by the change in his father.

A WHOLE CHURCH GOING WRONG

Sometimes a whole church goes wrong. One church informed the missionary that he would never be allowed to enter it again.

Indeed, individuals there threatened to kill him. They were clearly in the wrong but the mob-spirit so easily aroused in this people had possession of them, and collectively they were ready for anything, though taken singly each was more tractable. The circuit rider cancelled all other engagements and for ten days stayed by that church. All the officers were forced to resign. Those who were leaders in wrong doing were disciplined and for a considerable time the outcome was problematical. God gave grace, however, and eventually the whole church repented. To-day no church in his whole circuit welcomes the missionary so warmly as this one. Sometimes such experiences come so thick and fast and are so difficult that one longs to lay down his work and rest.

OTHER EXPERIENCES

There are other experiences, however, some ludicrous, some heroic, some sublime. As a little church, three years out from heathenism, the missionary noticing the generally unwashed condition of a really fine congregation, said *to the children*: "I had intended to take a photograph of this congregation this morning, but you children have forgotten to wash as your parents tell you to do every morning. You would be ashamed if I should take a picture of you in this condition. But if you will hurry home, wash and return at once, I will wait and take the picture." The sight that followed, almost every man, woman and child making for home in a new-found eagerness for cleanliness, heretofore in that church not next to godliness, and returning washed, combed and freshly clad, is one that the missionary will long remember. It gave a fine opportunity for a talk on the proper preparation for, and decorum during worship of God.

In another village a poor farmer sold his only ox to buy a church. In the first flush of joy which his devotion and sacrifice called forth, he passed the winter. But spring drew near and with it no prospect of getting his work done on which depended his very life. So, in deep distress, he came to the missionary. Self-support is so firm a principle of the Chosen Mission that this year in the Pyeng Yang territory the Mission's gifts total only one-sixteenth of what the native church gave; but even this principle is a good rule to break sometimes, and the missionary was sure of it when eventually he got his money back.

In another church a man under suspension was inquired for and visited. He and his old wife were found alone. So little affection have some husbands and wives that this man had never told his wife about Jesus, because she was deaf and it was difficult to speak to her. The missionary however, when he learned the circumstances, gave most attention to her, and after he had told of God's love and Jesus' sacrifice for her, the old woman broke down and cried, saying none had ever before told her that she, old, deaf and neglected might be saved. Squatting there in the courtyard of a miserable tumbledown mud house, she covenanted to give her heart to the Lord, and her husband covenanted to begin again. Thus it is that often the circuit rider feels that he has been near the gates of Heaven.

This, in brief is the circuit rider's life: "In journeyings often, in perils often . . . in labor and travail," year after year, "if by any means he may save some." Were it not for the sustaining grace of God no man could stand the strain and stress of such a life for long. With the Apostle Paul the circuit rider can also say—"There is that

which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches."

A CIRCUIT RIDER OF PYENG YANG, CHOSEN.

FIFTEEN QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY TO BE A MISSIONARY IN CHOSEN

It was just four years ago. The women had begun their missionary societies and enough money had been raised in the Syen Chun Society to pay the salary of one Korean woman to be their missionary among the heathen in whatever place the Home Mission Committee of Presbytery would designate. There were several candidates for the very difficult place. Any one of the members would have considered it the greatest honor that could be conferred on her should she be chosen. By a process of elimination the ones with special home responsibilities were not considered. Some four or five women seemed to some of the leaders of the society worthy candidates. A number wanted to go, whereas but one could be sent. It was left with the Committee of Presbytery to choose the one who should go. In discussing the several candidates the Committee finally settled on Hyensi. She had not been considered by the leading women so Pastor Kim, of the South Church, Syen Chun, and myself were appointed a Committee to tell them of our choice. We had kept the matter to ourselves until the night of the meeting. I was asked to speak first by the lady President who conducted the meeting with a dignity equal to that of a City Woman's Missionary Society in America. (I have visited many.) I explained in the gentlest terms possible the relation of the Women's Missionary society to the Presbytery and urged strongly an effort on their part to be submissive even though the decision was not according to the wishes of all. I led them

in prayer and Pastor Kim addressed them. His subject was "The History of the One we would choose to be your missionary to the heathen," or "Fifteen Qualifications necessary to be a Missionary." Here they are translated for you:

1. One who is always happy in Jesus.
2. One who sincerely has deep anxiety for those who have fallen and for those who know not Jesus.
3. One who is so full of Jesus that she thinks not of rules or ways and means in leading another to Jesus. She has the *way* where there is opportunity.
4. One who truthfully reverences her mother-in-law.
5. Sin is terrible to her. She repents broken-heartedly at even the smallest mistake.
6. She makes an effort to make others happy and she does it.
7. She is praised by the heathen for her great zeal and earnestness in preaching.
8. She doesn't preach to receive praise or to be chosen to some office in the Missionary Society or church.
9. One who is not trying to keep from losing official position already gained.
10. One who has no anxiety about whether her health will hold out if she does much work. She cares not for choice food or raiment and can sleep anywhere.
11. One who helps another do her work. She will help get the supper in the kitchen talking about Jesus. She will help with the sewing and find a way into the heart of the one she would lead.
12. Even though she may not know all the Bible truths to be able to teach them, yet by her words and actions she lives the truths.

13. She doesn't pretend to know what she doesn't know.

14. By her very ignorance the power of God is manifested.

15. She trusts not in learning or worldly ability but leans on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Before he had finished the women were whispering among themselves, "Hyensi! He means Hyensi!" She has a small pock-marked face, cross eyes, a tiny nose, a fat body, a small head. But these are not seen as she tells of Jesus and His love. She has a radiant smile that makes the marks on her face fade away in the wrinkles. One thinks not of the face or the form.

She was sent and the prayers followed her. As she was going along the road that she had travelled many times, hunting up those she had talked to and prayed for, a woman and her daughter-in-law were in the field. They hid from her. The daughter-in-law said to her mother-in-law, "Who is this woman from whom we hide?" The reply was, "Jesus." That night as the girl went into the village she determined to find that woman with the radiant face who made everybody happy. She went to one place and said, "Has Jesus been here?" "No," was the reply. She went from place to place and at last found Hyensi. She was led to Jesus, and told the above when she was baptized.

The ugliest of the women was chosen—Why? Because she had the qualifications. Wherever she went among the heathen she was called "Jesus" until they knew Him. *The* qualification is to be like Him, and Hyensi tried to live the life hid with Christ in God.

GEORGE S. MCCUNE,
Syen Chun—Chosen.